

State of Rhode Island

County of Washington

In Hopkinton on the third day of May 2022 A.D. the said Financial Town Assembly was called to order by Town Moderator Edwin James at 7:30 P.M. in the Town Hall Meeting Room, 1 Town House Road, Hopkinton, RI 02833.

PRESENT: Stephen Moffitt, Jr., Sharon Davis, Michael Geary, Robert Marvel, Scott Bill Hirst; Town Manager Brian Rosso, Finance Director Elizabeth Monty, Town Clerk Elizabeth Cook-Martin, Deputy Town Clerk Marita Murray and Town Moderator Edwin James were present in the Meeting Room.

The Financial Town Assembly was held as a hybrid meeting. The Order of Business included instructions for participating in the meeting. The proposed budget was posted on the Town's website. Print copies of the proposed budget and Capital Improvement Plan were available for the public. There were three participants on-line and one participant in person.

Town Moderator Edwin James called the remote Financial Town Assembly to order with a moment of silent meditation and salute to the Flag. He stated that the members of the Town Council, the Town Manager and Finance Director were in attendance and went on to read the following rules of procedure:

There will be no votes taken as there are no conflicting warrant items or petitions filed by electors, making the requirements of a quorum unnecessary.

Access to the proposed FY 22-23 Budget and Capital Improvement Plan is available to the public to view on-line on the Town website @www.hopkintonri.org.

On May 9, 2022 *(no later than one week and one day after the FTA) at 6:30 PM the Town Council will make final revisions to the budget/warrants and adopt the same for placement on the ballot for the all-day Referendum.

The electors of the Town will vote on the budget at the Financial Referendum scheduled for June 14, 2022 at the Town Hall. Polls will be open from 7:00 AM to 9:00 PM. The vote will be an approval or rejection of the municipal budget for FY 2022/2023 including the most recently approved Chariho budget - there is one warrant item proposed. In addition, the Town Charter requires the publication of an alternate budget comprised of the most recently approved Chariho School budget and the previous year's approved municipal budget and all approved warrant items. There is no ability to approve or reject individual budget line items. The deadline for receiving objections to individual line item(s) was by April 6, 2022 via the filing of a petition signed by 200 of the Town's electors

submitted to the Town Clerk. None were received.

Council President Moffitt began with the introduction of the proposed Budget for Fiscal Year 2022-2023 by provided a budget summary for Fiscal Year 2022/2023:

The Town's FY 2022/23 overall budget is \$28,121,377. This is an increase of \$448,855 or 1.6% from last fiscal year's budget.

Education expenses are budgeted at \$20,605,251. This is an increase of \$43,691, or 0.2%, from the last fiscal year's budget.

Municipal expenses and Capital Transfer are budgeted at \$7,235,333. This is an increase of \$256,745 or 3.7% from the last fiscal year's budget.

Departmental revenues are budgeted at \$2,410,061. This is a decrease of \$185,790, or 7.7% from the last fiscal year's budget.

The FY 2022/23 property tax rate is projected to be \$18.57, per thousand, which is an increase from the FY 2021/22 property tax rate of \$18.53.

This proposed budget incorporates some of the following items of interest:

- 1) In FY 22/23 the Town intends to use \$155,900 to fund a Full Revaluation which required by the State of Rhode Island every nine years.
- 2) The FY 22/23 budget includes funding for capital projects in the amount of \$280,794. The main projects include funding the Full Revaluation of Town Properties, the final payments to two public works equipment leases and the purchase of 1 new police cruiser.

A tax math example was provided:

FY 2021/22 – A typical home valued at \$300,000, at the current tax rate of \$18.53 per thousand, results in a total tax bill of \$5,559 (300 x \$18.53);

FY 2023/23 – That same home would, at the proposed tax rate of \$18.57 per thousand, results in a total tax bill of \$5,571 (300 x \$18.57), resulting in an annual property tax bill increase of \$12.00.

Education expenses represent 76% of the total FY 2022/23 budget.
Municipal expenses represent 24% of the total FY 2022/23 budget.

DISCUSSION ON PROPOSED BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2022-2023

Town Moderator James began to read through the expense and revenue line items.

Lori Ultsch of Diamond Hill Road commented that the police department would be receiving a police cruiser based on what is listed in the CIP and asked why there was such a huge increase in the funding for the police department. Town Manager Brian Rosso explained that the Town budget was rejected last year so the salary lines in the proposed budget reflect two years of salary increases based on their three-year union contract. Ms. Ultsch asked about the Parks and Recreation budget with not having had full activities and programs for the past two years and asked where did the funding go. Mr. Rosso explained that any

unspent amount reverts back in to the general fund. He added that with the projected revenue the town did not receive as a result of having had to cancel activities and programs, there were also expense lines that were not used. He explained they had to lay off two employees; they were able to off-set the reduction in revenues by also reducing expenses. Council President Moffitt added the Town cannot take from one budget and place into another budget. Ms. Ultsch expressed concerned about financial impacts and the rising cost of living this year. She commented that she felt the Town did not have enough economic development and also does not provide much in the way of services. Council President Moffitt indicated Town taxes would have to go up in order to add more services. Ms. Ultsch asked if the revenue from solar projects is reflected in the budget. Councilor Davis stated solar revenue was \$300,000.00 and explained that some solar projects have not begun; some projects are before the Planning Board and some are currently being challenged in Superior Court.

Councilor Hirst felt that people need to hold the Chariho School District accountable for its finances. There is a maintenance of effort law which is a factor as is student enrollment, which is down. He felt people were not willing to keep the Chariho School Committee in check. He stated he too supports economic development but pointed out that Article 12 Section 1 of the Rhode Island State Constitution places the power over education in the hands of the Rhode Island General Assembly. He feels there are serious questions about the school finances and often some town departments are penalized as a result; people target the large departments budgets. The school department gets anything it wants. Ms. Ultsch questioned the school department budget. Councilor Davis explained the school committee can move money around at will; between that and the maintenance of effort law is why the town would like to see a management audit but the school district is not interested in making any changes. Councilor Hirst noted the Council cannot compel the school district; just encourage public influence. He stated a separate management study would be the objective; an outside agency who takes no sides, but Chariho would lose control and would not want this. He felt the school committee ignores accountability.

Town Moderator Edwin James read through the expense and revenue line items.

There were no other questions on the expense and revenue line items.

Town Moderator Edwin James noted that there was one warrant item proposed for the June 14, 2022 budget referendum ballot: To restrict the unspent balance remaining in the Legal Fees - Solicitor line item #01-000-5225 and the unspent balance remaining in the Litigation & Collective Bargaining line item #01-000-5226 to be placed into the Legal Fees Restricted Account.

There were no other questions or comments.

ADJOURNMENT

The Town Moderator called for a motion to adjourn which was made by Councilor Hirst and seconded by Councilor Geary and the Moderator declared the Financial Town Assembly adjourned. Adjournment was at 8:00 P.M.

Elizabeth J. Cook-Martin

Town Clerk